Amendments to the Claims

1. (currently amended) Connecting means ~~(3, 4, 5, 6),~~ made in such a way that ~~they~~ one said connecting means can be connected with ~~each~~ the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions ~~(7, 10; 20, 21)~~ that are perpendicular relative to each other, and wherein said one and other connecting means have the same geometry.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) Connecting means according to claim 1, that are made so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means ~~(3, 5)~~ relative to the other connecting means ~~(4, 6)~~ and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

4. (currently amended) Connecting means according to claim 1, wherein two connecting means are first coupled with each other and are then interlocked by inserting a separate locking means ~~(11)~~, wherein the separate locking means preferably is a securing pin having in particular a cross-section that is substantially rectangular.

5. (currently amended) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising step-shaped or stair-shaped locking means ~~(3, 4)~~.

6. (currently amended) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means ~~(11)~~ which can be pushed into a channel formed by the connecting means, wherein at least one external dimension of the connecting means is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking means can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means and/or the (plural) locking means consist of a compressible material such as plastics.

7. (previously presented) Panels with connecting means provided laterally according to claim 1, which are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer.

8. (currently amended) Panels ~~according to claim 7,~~ with connecting means provided laterally, which panels are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer, the connecting means being made in such a way that they can be connected with each other in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, comprising further connecting means that are connected with each other by a turning motion and which are preferably provided on long sides of a panel with a rectangular surface.